



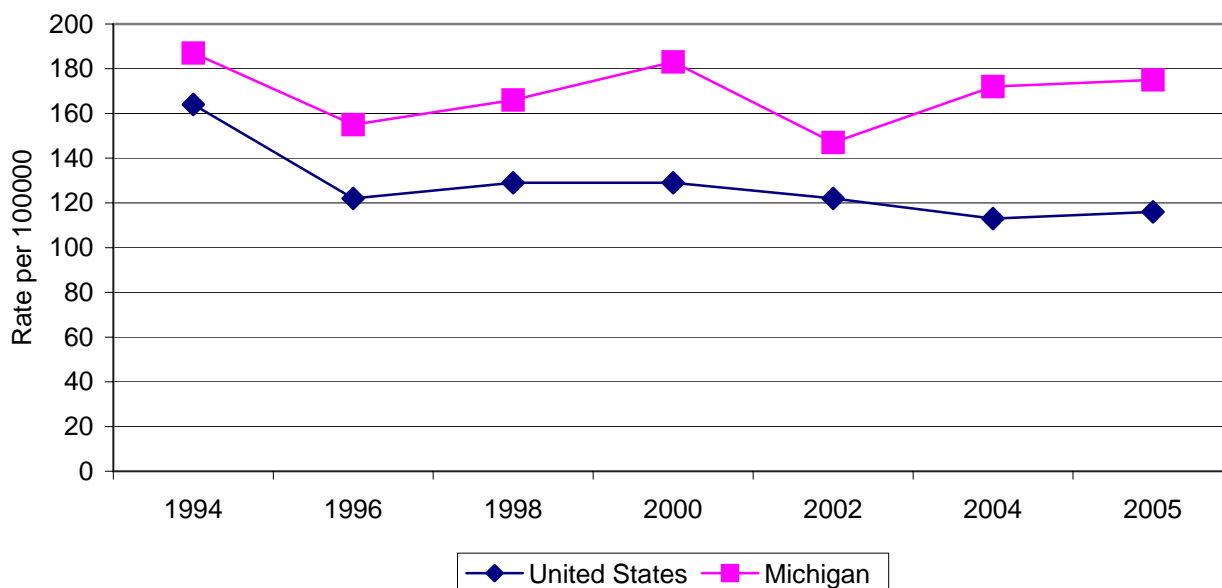
Topic: Sexually Transmitted Disease

35. Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection spread through sexual contact. It is one of the most common sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) in the United States, responsible for over 600,000 cases each year. Gonorrhea can be successfully treated with antibiotics, but individuals infected with gonorrhea remain infectious until they are diagnosed and treated. Many infections are asymptomatic, and, therefore, difficult to diagnose. Current program resources make it difficult to identify, treat, and provide partner referral to every person infected with gonorrhea.

How are we doing?

Gonorrhea Rates in Michigan and the United States, 1994-2005



The rate of gonorrhea in Michigan has fallen from a high of 187 per 100,000 population in 1994 to a low of 147 per 100,000 in 2002, and currently stands at 175 per 100,000 based on 2005 data. The highest rates of gonorrhea were in the City of Detroit, and in Genesee, Saginaw, Calhoun, and Berrien Counties. As rates and number of reported cases remain steady while targeting screening to those populations at highest risk, Michigan's goal is to continue current screening and surveillance practices.

Quinolone-Resistant *Neisseria Gonorrhea* (QRNG) is a type of gonorrhea resistant to commonly used antibiotics called quinolones. This type of gonorrhea has been increasing in prevalence in the past few years, especially in White men who have sex with men (MSM). The number of cases has increased 40% since 2002, with Kent and Oakland Counties having the highest prevalence. The prevalence of QRNG in Michigan in select screened populations is approximately 5.5%, which is similar to the five percent detected by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



How does Michigan compare with the U.S.?

The rate of gonorrhea in Michigan at 175 per 100,000 population in 2005 is significantly higher than the national rate of 116 per 100,000. The increased rate is likely due to a surveillance data system change, as well as highly targeted screening. Michigan ranks eighth among all states for its rate of gonorrhea.

How are different populations affected?

The highest rates of gonorrhea are found among those 15-24 years old, who accounted for 60% of the cases in 2005. Rates of gonorrhea are similar among men (42% of all cases) and women (57%), however are significantly higher among Blacks, regardless of gender. The rate among Black women is 13 times higher than for White women. The rate among Black men is 42 times higher than for White men. Rates are somewhat higher among Hispanic men and women when compared to rates for White men and women. Given that sexual activity does not vary by race, this rate is evidence that once a pathogen is in a community or social network, the likelihood of acquiring that infection increases significantly, and higher rates of transmission are the result.

Males are more often symptomatic and treated presumptively (without testing), based on symptoms. Young females are at increased risk for infection because an immature cervix has a thin layer of epithelium; this provides less protection from bacteria than a mature cervix.

What is the Department of Community Health doing to improve this indicator?

The MDCH is working to decrease the prevalence of gonorrhea and its health consequences. The Department participates in the national Infertility Prevention Project (IPP). Adolescents and young adults are populations on which Michigan places special emphasis; IPP is the core of these efforts. Adolescents, for both psychological and physical reasons, are vulnerable to STDs, and particularly to gateway diseases such as gonorrhea.

The MDCH and local public health personnel provide follow-up and partner referral to persons testing positive for gonorrhea, with priority placed on females of child bearing age. The Department is exploring innovative methods of partner management, including expedited partner therapy. The MDCH distributes antibiotics to local health department clinics to treat gonorrhea and also provides presentations on the gonorrhea epidemic in Michigan. Increased screening is encouraged as part of local health department reviews, Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS) reports, and IPP program evaluation.